

## Twisters churn across the state, causing great damage, outages

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flipped over at the same time, one on the New York end, the other on the Jersey side," said Port Authority Officer Anthony Latac.

One of the drivers, Ricky Tolbert, 34, of Pulaski, Tenn., died in the accident on the New Jersey side and a passenger was hospitalized with head injuries. Names of the other victims were not immediately available.

"It was a very different-looking world out there for a few minutes," a North Caldwell woman observed. "The sky was very, very black, and the wind was twisting the trees right over."

The heavy winds and lashing rain took its toll on the state's utilities, knocking out power to some 70,000 customers across New Jersey and causing several freak mishaps including at least two gas line fires—one briefly closing down Route 22 in Green Brook.

In Wyckoff, electrical wires downed by a fallen tree burned through the ground, rupturing a gas main and sparking a fire, said Town Administrator Bob Shannon, emergency management coordinator.

The fire, in a residential area, was extinguished quickly, police said.

Public Service Electric & Gas Co., the largest utility in the state, saw service cut to about 50,000 customers.

"The hardest hit was the Essex and Passaic areas," said PSEG spokesman Neil Brown. "There are hundreds of primary cables down and lots of secondary lines."

Brown said all available line crews were out in the field but expected some customers to still be without power well past midnight.

Some 10,000 Jersey Central Power & Light Co. customers were also blacked out, mostly in the western part of the state. JCP&L spokesman James F. Lowney said the outages were scattered, but included the closing of Monmouth College after a tree limb took down lines feeding the college. Gloucester County College in Sewell also was closed after losing power.

Another downed line forced an Asbury Park radio station off the air.

"Wherever there's trees, that's where the problems were," said Lowney.

Atlantic Electric Co. in South Jersey reported a total of 8,000 customers without power after high winds hit its western territory shortly after 11 a.m.

New Jersey Bell also experienced some downed wires, but had most of its trouble in Wyckoff, where falling electrical wires burned through a telephone cable and brought three poles down, knocking out phone service to 1,250 customers.

In Middlesex County, there were reports of downed trees and power lines in Perth Amboy, Woodbridge, Jamesburg, Spotswood, Monroe and Carteret.

In Union County, emergency management coordinator Philip Solomon said the towns hardest hit were Linden and Rahway.

Police in Elizabeth, Hillside, Roselle, Roselle Park, Rahway, Springfield and Cranford also said there were downed trees and wires on several streets.

In the Essex County community of Belleville, Stephanie Rogers, who was visiting friends at 179 Tappan Ave., said an uprooted tree fell against a house at 180 Tappan, and that a chimney was toppled and landed atop a parked car.

"Fortunately, there was no one in the house at the time," Rogers said.

She also said firemen blocked off Malone Avenue to Union Avenue because of the potential danger from falling wires.

In addition to dealing with fallen trees and chimneys, plus several damaged telephone wires in the northwest section of the town, Belleville officials opted to keep students from three schools, including Belleville High, until their parents could pick them up.

Nutley Fire Capt. Fred Scalera said 20 residents were evacuated from their homes on Hay and Nutley avenues when a PSEG gas line ruptured after a tree snapped from its roots.

They were taken to the parks and recreational building and no injuries were reported.

He said some residents returned to their homes about 3 p.m. after a gas leak was brought under control, while others had to seek emergency shelter last night.

Several intersections in the vicinity of Washington Street and River Road remained barricaded last night while municipal workers removed trees and PSEG workers repaired several grounded primary lines.

Scalera said torrential rains and gusting winds caused several trees and telephone polls to snap at about 12:30 p.m., and part of the roof at Selrex Corp. on River Road was blown off.

Fire Inspector David Wilson said there were many calls from residents who reported seeing a tornado-like funnel about 12:30 p.m.

"We had a lot of wind, sudden heavy rains and winds were blowing in all different directions," Wilson said.

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Emergency utility crews worked into the night to restore electrical power.

Nutley Police Chief Robert Delitta said the twister also led to an accident on Route 21 north, when a driver swerved into a concrete divider. Another driver heading south was injured when a chunk of concrete jarred loose from the first driver shattered his windshield, causing him to crash into the barrier.

The unidentified drivers were taken to Clara Maass Hospital in Belleville, police said.

In Lyndhurst, a motorist was stuck in his car for 30 minutes while a live wire was removed from the roof, Detective Capt. Francis McSweeney said.

The township also had damage in County Park North near Breslin Field, he said.

The field's pressbox was destroyed and several trees were uprooted, McSweeney said. Some transformers in the park also caught fire, but were put out immediately.

North Arlington police said some large branches, a tree and a telephone pole toppled.

A 77-year-old South Orange man driving his car north on Valley Street in Maplewood had a scare when strong

winds about 12:20 caused a tree to fall on his vehicle.

A powerful gust "just uprooted a tree" near Parker Avenue, causing it to crash down on the passenger side of Leo Workman's 1984 Buick, Capt. Ronald A. Rosselli said.

"The tree squashed the passenger side of the man's roof like a pancake," Rosselli added.

In Scotch Plains, the storm toppled a tree on a 1977 Oldsmobile owned by opera star Jerome Hines, which was parked in his driveway.

The storm hit North Caldwell shortly after noon, knocking out power and toppling stately old trees.

"The nice thing is we have no reports of injury or death," Police Chief James Rush said.

The major damage occurred at West Green Brook Road and at Grandview Avenue, said Rush. "We had a major transformer fire" that knocked out electrical power for hours.

Barbara Yeninas of North Caldwell was on her way home from work in West Caldwell to care for her sick daughter when the twister hit shortly after noon.

Yeninas said she saw no lights on

in West Essex Regional High School



Photo by Richard Resta

A large tree that knocked down power lines lies across Nutley Avenue in Nutley

and a downed power line on West Green Brook Road that was "shooting up" a house and a felled, "very big" pine tree.

She also said she saw a lot of damage on Pier Lane in Fairfield, including

uprooted fences, aluminum siding from a house and a felled, "very big" pine tree.

A Fairfield township employee, who said numerous wires and trees

were downed, termed the noontime storm a "mini-tornado."

She said power outages forced po-

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